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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 000727

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SUBJECT: MESSAHEL TELLS AMBASSADOR MIGRATION PRIMARILY AN AFRICAN ISSUE

REF: A. ALGIERS 657

¶B. ALGIERS 496

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

MIGRATION WITHIN AFRICA IS THE CENTRAL PROBLEM

¶11. (C) In an April 10 meeting with MFA Minister-Delegate Messahel, Ambassador pressed again for an inclusive regional approach to the migration problem that included Morocco and urged Algeria to reconsider participation in the Rabat-hosted conference on migration. Messahel termed the recent AU experts meeting on migration successful in developing a common framework for dealing with the issue; argued that Morocco had excluded itself by leaving the African Union; said the Rabat conference would focus only on the European dimension of the problem, when in fact African countries were themselves the main destination of migrants; criticized Spain's failure to support projects in Africa that would help address the roots of the migration problem despite it being just 14 kilometers from Africa; and said that Morocco would be invited to an AU-European meeting in Tripoli on June 6-7 and that cooperation in this Five Plus Five Framework would continue. (End Summary.)

¶12. (U) Ambassador, accompanied by PolEc Chief, met April 10 with Minister Delegate for African and Maghreb Affairs Messahel. MFA Director General for African Affairs Chergui was also in attendance. Asked for an assessment of the April 3-5 meetings of experts on migration and development, Messahel called the meetings a success, noting that 50 or so African countries had participated and had succeeded in creating a common framework for addressing the migration issue. Messahel said it was important to address the root cause of migration, which was underdevelopment in Africa. Migration within Africa, stressed Messahel, was the biggest problem; out of the total, relatively few African migrants reached Europe. Some of the main destinations of African migrants were South Africa, Congo, Algeria, and the Ivory Coast. Within Africa there were countries of origin, transit, and destination. Algeria, for example, was less and less a country of transit for Europe and increasingly a country of destination. Fighting illegal immigration, mostly from the south, was vital. Messahel said the vast majority of migrants in the Tamanrasset area of southern Algeria, for example, were in the country unlawfully.

ALGERIA AND AU PURSUING A GLOBAL APPROACH

¶13. (C) Messahel told Ambassador Algeria was concerned about

human trafficking and wanted to manage the flows across countries and borders. Because the issue was primarily an African issue, with the greatest impact on Africa, it required an AU framework of discussion. This was why Algeria was not interested in Rabat's more localized approach that focused on migration to Europe. Algeria was not against the Moroccan-French-Spanish migration agenda, he claimed, but was not necessarily for it either. He stressed the desire in Algiers to treat the problem globally. Noting the migration concerns of North Africa were different from those of West Africa, East Africa or the south, the African Union (AU) approach was to address all the issues together. Asked if there had been differences over the idea of creating "welcome centers," Messahel said that issue was not addressed at the conference, adding that was an idea being pushed by the Europeans that did not have much appeal to African countries.

ALGERIA: MOROCCO EXCLUDED ITSELF BY LEAVING AFRICAN UNION

¶4. (C) Expressing agreement that a global approach to the migration problem was necessary, Ambassador said for this reason we hoped Algeria would reconsider the issue of Moroccan participation and Algerian attendance at the Rabat-hosted conference this summer. Messahel argued that Algeria and the AU did not exclude Morocco from the AU experts meeting. Rather, Morocco excluded itself by leaving the AU. Provided Morocco embraced AU positions, it could reintegrate itself in the AU at any time and participate, Messahel said somewhat ingenuously. Ambassador noted that although not a member of the AU, Morocco was geographically a part of Africa and certainly part of the migration problem. It was only logical that it would be included in discussions.

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Messahel repeated that Morocco had excluded itself. The issue should not be politicized.

MOROCCO, FRANCE, AND SPAIN PURSUING LOCAL APPROACH

¶5. (C) Messahel said France, Spain, and Morocco were free to organize meetings as they liked but claimed they should not assume Algeria would participate in such non-AU events without prior consultation. He also suggested that Spain was only interested in solving the problem insofar as it impacted on Spain. For example, he was unaware of a single Spanish project that benefited Africa in combating illegal immigration, even though Spain was 14 kilometers from Africa. Why, asked Messahel, should Algeria join France and Spain in Rabat when the AU was tackling the problem at its roots? The AU had a global approach that included development in addressing migration. That approach did not interest a country like Spain, which sought a local approach. Messahel said 75% of Spain's migrants came from Latin America, which seemed not to concern Madrid since these migrants easily integrated thanks to their common religion and language. Fifteen percent of Spain's illegal immigrants come from Morocco, 5 percent from eastern Europe, and one percent from Africa other than Morocco. The real burden of African migrants fell to Africa, where Messahel said large numbers of migrants resided in countries like the Ivory Coast.

AU TO INVITE MOROCCO UNDER BOUTEFLIKA'S "CAIRO FORMULA"

¶6. (C) Asked if Algeria supported discussions within the Five Plus Five framework, Messahel said "most definitely." Messahel added that the AU was working on organizing an Africa-Europe meeting to be held in Libya June 6-7. The meeting would be organized within the AU framework, and Morocco would be included (or at least invited) pursuant to the AU "Cairo Formula" (proposed by President Bouteflika in 2000) whereby Morocco would be included and the Polisario excluded. On the way out of the meeting, Chergui told us it

was not clear whether the Europeans would agree to attend the meeting in Libya. Chergui added there would also be a number of follow-on regional meetings in Africa, because the nature of the immigration problem within Africa varied from region to region. Morocco would be invited to participate in these sub-regional discussions, he said.

ABUJA ACCORD WOULD PAVE WAY FOR
SUDAN'S ACCEPTANCE OF REHATTING

¶7. (C) On the subject of Darfur, Messahel told Ambassador that Algeria, like the U.S., Sudan, Europe and Africa, was looking for a global accord to come out of the meetings in Abuja. A global accord would make Sudan's acceptance of the rehutting of the AMIS easier. Algeria supported rehutting by the end of September and to that end wanted a global agreement by the end of April. Messahel said a global accord was needed to pave the way for Sudanese acceptance of rehutting and keep negotiations from coming to an impasse. The Sudanese demanded that rehutting occur in the context of an overall agreement, even though this was not the case for the AU. Ambassador noted that a rapid agreement was necessary to stop the bloodshed.

ERDMAN